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PARTY ELECTION CAMPAIGNING IN BRITAIN

The Labour Party

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ABSTRACT

A modern British election campaign is multidimensional, with significant variations in party strategies over time and location. In the general elections of 1992 and 1997, the Labour Party developed innovative forms of campaigning, some of which the Conservative Party attempted to replicate in the 2001 general election. The article outlines the main features of Labour's campaign leading up to the 2001 general election. In order to evaluate the impact of Labour's campaign on turnout and party choice, data on the Conservative and Liberal Democrat campaigns are also examined using the 2001 British Election Study panel survey. The impact of party campaigning is revealed to have a significant effect on both turnout and party choice. Liberal Democrat and Labour campaigning proves to be especially influential. These findings reinforce earlier research on the importance of party campaigning in influencing voting behaviour.

KEY WORDS ■ Conservative Party ■ election campaigns ■ Labour Party ■ Liberal Democrat Party

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to estimate the effects of Labour's campaigning on electoral participation and party choice in the general election of 2001. Since the impact of Labour's campaign cannot be assessed without taking into account the campaigns of its main rivals, attention is also paid to the campaigning activities of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. But the main focus of the article is on the Labour campaign. It is important to remember that while commentators often describe *a* British general election campaign in the singular, general elections are actually fought out

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in 659 separate constituencies. While some features of election campaigning will be the same regardless of the locality, there are enough variations in campaigning efforts, styles and intensities across the country to make it necessary to describe the election in terms of a set of different campaigns. Variations in these campaigns will depend upon a range of factors, including the geographical location (for example, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), the closeness of the constituency contest, the state of local party organizations and the calibre and commitment of the candidates.

In order to capture all the essential features it is necessary to distinguish general election campaigns along both temporal and spatial election dimensions. With regard to the temporal, some would argue that election campaigning is now a permanent feature of political life. From the day after one general election, parties start the process of campaigning for the next one. There is therefore a long campaign (Miller et al., 1990), which involves constant news and opinion management, as well as medium- and short-term campaigns. Once the medium-term campaign commences, parties establish their overall organizational structures, select their main campaign themes, designate the personnel for key roles, select the constituencies for particular efforts and decide which voters will be systematically contacted. During the short-term campaign, parties issue their election manifestos, conduct press conferences, arrange leadership tours and key speeches, make election broadcasts, engage in advertising and private polling and intensify their efforts to contact voters in every constituency.

Similarly, viewed spatially, there are at least three types of general election campaign (Seyd and Whiteley, 2002). First, there is the central campaign, which is organized from party headquarters and is concentrated largely around the party leadership. Second, there are the centrally coordinated local campaigns in which party headquarters provide local parties with personnel, technological support services and literature. In these campaigns, local efforts are very much controlled from party headquarters. Third, there are the purely locally directed campaigns in which the activists organize their campaign according to their own priorities and resources. While much attention has been concentrated upon the central campaign, in part because of a consensus among both politicians and academic observers that this was the only campaign that mattered in explaining electoral outcomes, more attention is now given to both the centrally coordinated and local campaigns. This is because there has been a growing recognition in the last few general elections by both politicians and academic observers alike that these campaigns can have a significant impact on the outcome. In Figure 1 we distinguish Labour's 2001 general election campaigns along these temporal and spatial dimensions.

In most of the 15 general elections held since the end of the Second World War, the Conservative Party has been the election campaign innovator. So, for example, it was the Conservative Party that first developed political advertising in the 1950s (Cockett, 1994). The party's relative abundance of

		Temporal		
		Long (May 1997–March 2000)	Medium (March 2000–February 2001)	Short (February 2001–June 2001)
Spatial	Central	Government policies Government annual reports Government news management Government sampling of public opinion Party management Fighting elections (European, Scotland, Wales, London, local government)	HQ organizational structures established Preparation of election manifesto Advertising agency employed Priority constituencies selected National telephone bank established Training of full-time organizers	Ministerial policy initiatives Publication of election manifesto News conferences Speeches and interviews Party election broadcasts Party advertising Party opinion polling
	Centrally coordinated local	Reselection or selection of MPs/candidates	Agreement of priority constituency targets Commencement of voter identification First direct mailings to targeted voters	Production and distribution of candidates' election addresses Registration of postal voters Direct mailings and leaflet distributions Candidates' news releases, meetings and interviews
	Local	Selection of candidates		Production and distribution of candidates' election addresses Registration of postal voters Leaflet distributions Candidates' news releases, meetings and interviews

Figure 1. Labour's election campaign 2001

resources and its links with business, in particular the advertising industry, explain much of its post-war campaigning dominance. But this relative dominance began to shift in the 1990s and Labour was generally perceived to have performed better than the Conservative Party in the 1992 general election (Butler and Kavanagh, 1992). This Labour superiority was maintained both in 1997 and 2001. In addition, the Liberal Democrats, even with their limited resources, have concentrated effectively upon local campaigning, which has won them seats in both the 1997 and 2001 elections (Whiteley and Seyd, 2002). Both major parties have learned from the campaigning methods of the Liberal Democrats in recent general elections (Whiteley and Seyd, 2002).

After an initial examination of the environment in which campaigning takes place and the broad strategies of the main parties, we go on to

examine the details of the Labour campaign in the 2001 general election. This leads into a discussion of the impact of the local party campaigns on the electorate, using data from the 2001 British Election Study. The evidence suggests that such campaigns play a key role in influencing the voters, and the implications of this are discussed later in the article.

Trends in Campaigning

It is important to understand the context in which campaigning now takes place. First, the fragmentation of the media and the development of 24-hour news has created a very rapid news cycle with a voracious demand for stories (Norris et al., 1999). Second, the decline of party identification among voters and the decline of activism among party members (Seyd and Whiteley, 2002; Whiteley and Seyd, 2002) have created a highly competitive situation, particularly in marginal constituencies. Third, the limitations on local, constituency election-campaign expenditure and, for the first time in 2001, on national, election-campaign expenditure, mean that the parties are dependent upon voluntary activity in local campaigning.

As is well known, the combined impact of the British electoral system and the distribution of parliamentary seats results in a limited number of marginal seats, and these are crucial in determining the overall election result. This results in the parties now concentrating heavily on marginal seats and targeting their campaigns almost exclusively upon no more than 1 in 5 of the total number of constituencies. This pushes them in the direction of trying to centralize campaign efforts. Central and centrally coordinated campaigns strictly orchestrate policy initiatives, public statements and speeches. Daily news conferences attempt to set the news agenda, and rapid response techniques are used to provide an immediate riposte to opponents' initiatives. The language and metaphors of military battles are often invoked (hence the use of such terms as 'the war room'). However, it is important to note that just as wars are actually fought in often haphazard and unpredictable ways, so are election campaigns. Whereas the key actors would want observers to believe that all was efficiently planned and organized (for example, see Gould, 1999), the reality is rather different. Earlier research has shown that, at least in 1997, the centrally directed local campaign was rather ineffective (Seyd and Whiteley, 2002). In 2001, Labour wanted to protect the electoral gains made in the 1997 landslide victory. This meant that the party had to fight a defensive campaign with the aim of holding on to its majority (Seyd, 2001). We examine this campaign in detail below.

The Conservatives, in contrast in 2001, were obliged to fight an offensive campaign. But in doing this they were hampered by the well-documented phenomenon that local Conservative parties protect their independence and are rather reluctant to campaign outside of their own areas (Whiteley et al., 1994). This means that the Conservatives are less efficient at allocating

resources to marginal seats than their rivals (Denver and Hands, 1997). They were also hampered in their national campaign, which was widely criticized for being too narrow and lacking in themes that resonated with the voters. Kenneth Clarke, the former Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, criticized the campaign for being the culmination of what he described as 'four wasted years for the Tory party' (Collings and Seldon, 2001: 66). Certainly their decision to concentrate on saving the pound as the principal theme of the campaign as polling day approached did not reflect the priorities of most voters. Electors were mainly concerned about domestic issues such as the state of the public services (Clarke et al., 2004).

The Liberal Democrats fought a different type of campaign from their main rivals. In their case, like Labour, they wanted to protect the electoral gains they made in 1997, while at the same time concentrating resources on winnable seats. This meant campaigning in Conservative seats, since the Liberal Democrats were second to the Conservatives in 144 seats and second to Labour in only 8 seats. They had abandoned the policy of equidistance between Labour and the Conservatives after the 1992 general election (Denver, 2001) and this had paid dividends in 1997, and so they continued this approach in 2001. They were the most efficient of the three parties in concentrating their campaign resources in seats where they had the most impact in 1997 (Whiteley and Seyd, 2002), and it seems likely that this state of affairs continued in 2001.

The Labour Campaign in the 2001 General Election

Labour's central and centrally coordinated campaign, 'Operation Turnout', concentrated upon specific voters and constituencies. The party targeted weak Labour supporters, who were defined as first-time Labour voters in 1997, Labour voters in 1997 whose support for the party had become less firm or who had not voted in local or European elections in the intervening years, and Labour supporters in low turnout areas. The party believed that the problem with these weak Labour voters would not be that they might switch to other parties, but that they might not vote at all. So Labour's campaign strategy was to mobilize these people.

With regard to particular constituencies, whereas in 1997 all the party's centrally provided campaigning resources, such as professional agents, had been strictly concentrated upon 90 target seats, in 2001 resources were concentrated upon 148 'priority' seats and the party's members were encouraged to work in these.[1] These constituency parties were eligible for central technological support, namely the leasing of computers and election software, full-time organizing support,[2] access to both the national telephone call centre in North Shields (set up in January 2001 with 60 staff) and the regional call centres. This included the provision of centrally produced literature, including leaflets, the 'Labour Rose' newspaper and

personal letters, targeted at particular groups of voters, from Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. In addition, 63 of the priority seats received 5,000 copies of specially produced videos highlighting the achievements of the local Labour MP which were distributed among Labour-supporting households believed to be less likely to vote. Finally, the priority seats received a centrally planned stream of senior politicians and other prominent personalities to generate local media news stories.

In return for this central support, local parties were set distinct targets. By June 2000 they had to have contacted half of all voters in their constituencies, and identified all first-time voters and all those who had voted Labour in the 1997 general election but not since. Then by October 2000 local parties were expected to have telephoned all first-time voters, written to all who voted only in general elections, and 'blitzed'[3] all low turnout areas twice. And, finally, by December 2000 they had to have communicated twice with all first-time voters and organized a programme of events in low turnout areas.

What the local parties provided in this centrally coordinated part of the campaign were human and financial resources. Active members were required to carry out the 'voter identification' and 'building relationships' exercises by using local telephone banks. These efforts were also supplemented by the use of a national telephone bank. Once the targeted group of voters had been identified, the direct mailings had to be delivered by hand, since postal charges would have been too expensive. Beyond these two key activities, local members were needed to resource the street stalls (important for general voter contact and for the registration of postal votes) and for the 'blitzing' of areas of strong Labour support.

While this local campaigning was being coordinated from the centre by planning and strategy groups and task forces, the central campaign also involved the publication of 5 different manifestos,[4] arranging 26 national news conferences, making 5 party election broadcasts, and the launch of a national advertising campaign. Tony Blair made 29 formal speeches, engaged in 4 open question or studio debates, and gave 4 lengthy one-to-one media interviews. This campaign was conducted almost entirely through the national and regional media.

What was the electoral effect of all this campaigning? In the next section we go on to estimate this question using data from the 2001 British Election Study.[5]

Evaluating the Impact of the Campaign in 2001

The 2001 British Election Study surveys contained a battery of items designed to measure the impact of party campaign activity in different constituencies on the electorate. These items make it possible to assess the extent to which the mobilizing strategies of the parties had an impact on

the voters, both in terms of their willingness to turn out and vote and on their choice of parties.

Table 1 contains information on four aspects of party campaigning as perceived by the electors. It can be seen in this table that just under two-thirds of electors saw a party political broadcast during the election campaign, and just under a quarter were canvassed face-to-face by a representative of one of the political parties. It is evident that the parties still predominantly rely on face-to-face contact when it comes to canvassing, since three times as many electors were approached on the doorstep than were approached by telephone. Telephone canvassing is an important and growing form of campaigning, but it still has a long way to go before it eclipses doorstep campaigning.[6] The table also shows that the parties did a limited amount of knocking on doors to remind electors to vote on polling day.

Table 2 contains a more detailed breakdown of the mobilizing activities of the parties in relation to the campaign activities highlighted in Table 1. More than 8 out of 10 electors who saw a party political broadcast saw a

Table 1. Elector perceptions of the campaign in the 2001 general election

Percentage of electors who:	
Saw a party political broadcast	63
Were canvassed by a party face-to-face	22
Were canvassed by a party by telephone	7
Were reminded to vote on polling day by a party	5

Table 2. Elector perceptions of the campaign in 2001 by party

Percentage of electors exposed who:	
Saw a Labour party political broadcast	84
Saw a Conservative party political broadcast	78
Saw a Liberal Democrat party political broadcast	67
Saw an SNP party political broadcast (in Scotland)	56
Saw a Plaid Cymru party political broadcast (in Wales)	50
Were canvassed by Labour	46
Were canvassed by the Conservatives	46
Were canvassed by the Liberal Democrats	28
Were canvassed by the SNP (in Scotland)	42
Were canvassed by Plaid Cymru (in Wales)	37
Were telephoned by Labour	47
Were telephoned by the Conservatives	36
Were telephoned by the Liberal Democrats	10
Were reminded to vote by Labour	48
Were reminded to vote by the Conservatives	25
Were reminded to vote by the Liberal Democrats	21

Labour broadcast. This was slightly higher than the proportion who saw a Conservative broadcast and significantly higher than the proportion who saw a Liberal Democrat one. It is also interesting to note that the three major parties did significantly better in winning an audience for their broadcasts than the Nationalist parties did in Scotland and Wales, both of whom reached just over half their electorates who saw a broadcast.

Table 2 also shows that the canvassing efforts of Labour and the Conservatives were roughly comparable, with both parties reaching just under half of the electors who reported being canvassed. In contrast, the Liberal Democrats canvassed less than a third, a rather smaller percentage than was reached by the Nationalists in Scotland and Wales. Effective canvassing has to be targeted, so it is not surprising that none of the parties tried to canvass a majority of the electorate. Less than a quarter of electors who were canvassed reported being canvassed by more than one party, which reinforces the point that the party message is fairly closely targeted at different geographical communities.

In relation to telephone canvassing, Table 2 shows that Labour put in a more extensive effort than its rivals, reaching nearly half of the electorate who reported being canvassed in this way. In contrast, the Conservatives reached just over a third of this electorate and the Liberal Democrats about 10 percent. Clearly, the Liberal Democrats have not caught up with their rivals in relation to this type of campaigning. The Nationalist parties are omitted from this section of the table since there were too few cases to reliably estimate the impact of their telephone campaigns.

It is evident from Table 2 that the Labour Party out-campaigned its rivals by a significant margin when it came to reminding the voters to turn out on polling day. About half of the people who reported being contacted on polling day identified Labour as the party that reached them. In contrast, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats did much less of this type of campaigning.

A distinction is often made between campaign activities designed to persuade electors to switch their votes to another party and activities which aim to reinforce the loyalties of existing party supporters. On the face of it, a party should find it easier to reinforce existing loyalties or to win the support of electors who identify with no party than to convert the supporters of a rival party. With this in mind, campaign activities aimed at rival supporters are probably inefficiently targeted. On the other hand, given that canvassing is designed to identify supporters as much as convert people, parties are limited in their ability to choose between these alternatives.

Table 3 gives some insight into the extent to which the parties were able to reinforce their own support as opposed to converting others in 2001. The table uses a question in the election study that asks people to indicate if they thought of themselves as a supporter of a political party. It shows the extent to which the parties were able to reinforce their own support as opposed to try and convert supporters from rivals by campaigning. The table shows

Table 3. Conversion and reinforcement in constituency campaigns

	Percent of people canvassed by a party who were supporters of:			
	Labour	*Conservatives*	*Liberal Democrats*	*None*
Party canvassing				
Labour	42	18	6	34
Conservatives	34	27	9	31
Liberal Democrats	38	25	7	30
Party telephoning				
Labour	46	21	3	31
Conservatives	20	32	12	36
Liberal Democrats	11	18	11	61
Party reminding voters to turn out				
Labour	51	7	0	42
Conservatives	18	50	0	32
Liberal Democrats	48	4	0	48

that 42 percent of the people canvassed face-to-face by Labour were Labour supporters, and a further 34 percent were supporters of no party. In contrast, 18 percent and 6 percent, respectively, of those canvassed by Labour were Conservative or Liberal Democrat supporters. Thus it can be argued that three-quarters of Labour's canvassing efforts were 'efficient', since they did not try to convert supporters of rival parties.

In contrast to Labour, Table 3 shows that only about two-thirds of Conservative face-to-face canvassing was efficient in the above sense, since over one-third of their canvassing efforts were directed at the supporters of their main rivals. Liberal Democrat campaign efforts were the least efficiently allocated in this sense, since only about 4 out of 10 of people targeted were either Liberal Democrat supporters or the supporters of no party at all. Liberal Democrats have significantly fewer supporters in the electorate than the other two parties, so it is harder for them to campaign efficiently in this sense. On the other hand they are effective at targeting their campaigns on constituencies which they believe can be won. So if the Liberal Democrats target Labour voters in constituencies where they have a better chance of beating the Conservatives than Labour, this might be a fairly efficient form of campaigning.

The Labour Party was similarly effective in its telephone canvassing, but both Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties improved their campaign efficiency in this particular mode by targeting a higher proportion of their own or no-party supporters. Both Labour and Conservative parties effectively targeted their own supporters in reminding people to vote on election day, but the Liberal Democrat election-day campaign organization was decidedly awry, with one half of those they reminded to vote being Labour

supporters. Again this point has to be qualified by taking into account the local tactical situation in particular constituencies. But overall, the evidence in Table 3 suggests that Labour was able to do more reinforcing of its support than its main rivals, although not all of this was necessarily the product of a conscious strategy.

In order to be able to model the effects of campaigning on turnout and party choice we combine the information in Tables 1 and 2 into several campaign mobilization scales. These appear in Table 4 and they represent the cumulative exposure of electors to campaign activities. Thus at one end of the scale 28 percent of electors were exposed to none of these forms of campaign activity; they did not see a party political broadcast, they were not canvassed either face-to-face or by telephone and they were not reminded to vote on polling day. At the other end of the scale less than half a percent were exposed to all four forms of campaign activity. As Table 4 indicates, the modal category is exposure to one campaign activity, usually a party political broadcast. Our hypothesis is that multiple exposure to campaign activities will have a significant effect on the probability of an elector voting and on their party choice. We investigate this issue next.

Modelling the Effects of Party Mobilization

This discussion raises the key question of whether or not exposure to campaign activity influenced turnout and party choice in the election. Earlier work has suggested that campaigning activities do have a significant influence on turnout and party choice in Britain (Denver and Hands, 1997; Pattie et al., 1995; Whiteley and Seyd, 1994, 2002). Such work uses campaign expenditure data, surveys of party agents or surveys of party members to identify effects. But the hypothesis has yet to be tested using surveys of electors.

A common methodological problem with this exercise is identifying the effects of campaigning on voting behaviour separately from the many other factors which can influence turnout and party choice. One way to deal with

Table 4. The mobilization scales

	All parties	*Labour*	*Conservatives*	*Liberal Democrats*
Zero	28	19	25	36
One	51	69	64	58
Two	17	10	10	5
Three	3	2	1	0
Four	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.2

this problem is to utilize panel data and to specify a model of the following type (see Finkel, 1993):

$$V_t = \alpha_t + \beta_1 V_{t-1} + \beta_2 M_t$$

where *Vt* scores 1 at time *t*, after the election, if the individual voted, 0 otherwise; V_{t-1} measures the probability that an individual will vote at time *t*–1, before the election; M_t is the degree of mobilization by campaigns during the election measured after the election at time *t*.

In this specification, turnout in the election depends on the individual's willingness to vote prior to the election campaign and their subsequent exposure to the mobilizing activities of the political parties during that campaign. Prior willingness to vote acts as a control variable for all the other factors, such as the voter's socio-economic status, educational attainment, interest in the campaign, and so on, which might prompt an individual to vote irrespective of the election campaign. This specification can easily be adapted to the task of evaluating the influence of campaign mobilization on party choice, as follows:

$$L_t = \alpha_t + \beta_1 L_{t-1} + \beta_2 M_t$$

where L_t scores 1 if the respondent votes Labour in the election measured at time *t*, 0 otherwise; L_{t-1} scores 1 if the respondent indicates that s/he will vote Labour prior to the campaign at time *t*–1, 0 otherwise; and M_t is the degree of mobilization by party campaigns during the election measured at time *t* after the election.

In order to estimate these models we require panel data with variables in the first wave of the panel prior to the election measuring respondents' willingness to turn out and vote, as well as indicators of their prior party preferences. Equally, in order to get an accurate picture of the effects of the Labour campaign, we need to take into account the effects of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat campaigns as well. These data are available in the 2001 British Election Study, which contained a two-wave panel of interviews conducted prior to and immediately after the 2001 general election.

Table 5 contains the logistic regression estimates of the probability of voting measured after the election and predicted from the prior probability of voting together with the mobilization index which is the first column of Table 4. In this model, prior probabilities of voting are estimated with an 11-point scale (0 to 10) in which respondents were asked to indicate how willing they were to turn out and vote in the general election. The post-election probability of voting measure is the validated turnout dummy variable in the survey.[7]

The evidence in Table 5 indicates that both prior probability of voting and the mobilization index are highly significant predictors of turnout. The logistic regression model explains just over a fifth of the variance in the

Table 5. Logistic regressions of mobilization on turnout in 2001

Dependent variable: reported voting in wave two

Predictor variables	*Unstandardized effects*	*Standardized effect**
Probability of voting in wave one	0.27***	0.35
Mobilization index	0.192**	0.11
McKelvey R-squared	0.21	
Percent correctly classified	76	

* The effect on the probability of voting of a change in the predictor variable from 1 standard deviation below the mean to 1 standard deviation above the mean, holding the other variable constant.

validated turnout measure. The standardized effects in column 2 show that the prior probability of voting is about three times stronger than the mobilization index in its effect on turnout.[8] This is to be expected, but it does not detract from the highly significant campaigning effects.

Table 6 contains the party choice models for the three major parties, and Table 7 the standardized estimates calculated on the same basis as those in Table 5. These results show consistent campaign effects which are in-line with expectations. All of the campaign variables, with one exception, have a statistically significant impact on party support. Thus Labour support is increased by exposure to the Labour mobilization index and decreased by exposure to the Conservative and Liberal Democrat mobilization indices. Similar patterns exist for the other two parties. Prior party support consistently has the strongest influence on voting, with the Labour effect being the strongest of all. Prior party support is weakest for the Liberal Democrats, but this reinforces the point that they have most to gain from campaigning. Clearly, if prior vote intention for the Liberal Democrats is weak, then campaigning can do a lot to reinforce this, and thereby shore

Table 6. Logistic regressions of mobilization on party choice in 2001

Dependent variable: party choice in wave two

Predictor variables	*Labour*	*Conservatives*	*Liberal Democrats*
Intention to vote for party in wave one	3.00***	3.28***	3.39***
Labour mobilization index	0.63***	–0.42***	–0.40***
Conservative mobilization index	–0.31***	0.50***	–0.53***
Liberal Democrat mobilization index	–0.19	–0.06	1.07***
McKelvey R-squared	0.41	0.34	0.24
Percent correctly classified	83	88	88

Table 7. Logistic regressions of mobilization on party choice in 2001: standardized effects

Dependent variable: party choice in wave two

Predictor variables	*Labour*	*Conservatives*	*Liberal Democrats*
Intention to vote for party in wave one	0.55	0.29	0.13
Labour mobilization index	0.18	–0.06	–0.08
Conservative mobilization index	–0.10	0.09	–0.04
Liberal Democrat mobilization index	–0.06	–0.01	0.13
McKelvey R-squared	0.41	0.34	0.24
Percent correctly classified	83	88	88

up support. The Liberal Democrat mobilization scale has the strongest effect of all the mobilization variables in these tables, with one exception. This reinforces the point that campaigning is particularly important for the third party. The influence of Labour mobilization on Labour voting is also strong, even when prior Labour voting intention is taken into account.

We have concentrated particularly on the Labour campaign in this article, and in view of the strong effects identified in Tables 6 and 7 it is clear that campaigning was important for the party. Given this, it is interesting to disaggregate the campaigning index for Labour to try to identify the relative importance of the different components of the index.

Table 8 reruns the Labour model of Tables 6 and 7, but this time dividing up the components of the mobilization index. The table contains the standardized estimates of the models and different models are estimated for each of the four components. The results of this exercise are interesting, since they suggest that the most important mobilizing activity in influencing

Table 8. Logistic regressions of mobilization on Labour voting in 2001

Dependent variable: Labour Party choice in wave two

Predictor variables		*Standardized effects*
Prior intention to vote for Labour	3.00***	0.55
Conservative mobilization index	–0.32***	–0.09
Liberal Democrat mobilization index	–0.20	–0.05
Canvassing face-to-face	0.45***	0.06
Canvassing by telephone	0.63**	0.05
Reminding voters to turn out	0.91***	0.06
Watching a party political broadcast	0.70***	0.14
McKelvey R-squared	0.41	0.41
Percent correctly classified	83	83

the vote is watching a Labour Party political broadcast. While all of the mobilizing activities have a statistically significant impact on the vote, observing a party political broadcast has the largest effect. It is nearly three times more important than canvassing, for example. Given that party political broadcasts are assumed by most commentators to be something that the electorate regards as boring and to be avoided, this is a surprising finding. The second largest effects are face-to-face canvassing and reminding voters to turn out on polling day, both of which have a slightly larger impact on the vote than telephone canvassing.

With regard to the classification of the campaign in Figure 1, it is clear that the central campaign, which is responsible for party political broadcasts, is very important. But the local campaigns, which are responsible for face-to-face contacts with voters are also important. Indeed the combined effect of the local campaigns is roughly the same as that of party political broadcasts.[9] This suggests that effective campaigning requires a good mix of central and local activities.

Conclusions

These findings reinforce conclusions from earlier research that constituency campaigning is important in influencing voting behaviour. They also demonstrate the significance of party election broadcasts as part of the parties' central campaigning efforts; this is at a time when there are some doubts concerning the future format of such broadcasts. These opportunities for the parties to address the voters directly turn out to be quite important. In the context of a de-aligned electorate and a 24-hour news cycle it appears that campaigning is important and may become more important in the future. In the context of declining party membership and activism (Whiteley and Seyd, 2002) party leaderships will have to devise incentives in order to encourage volunteers to participate in these campaigns in the future. At the moment the marginalization of party members in the British political process by the Blair government (see Seyd and Whiteley, 2002) is likely to reduce the incentives for voluntary action in the Labour Party. If this continues it means that the voluntary party will be significantly weaker at the time of the next election than it was in 2001. Turning this around will not be easy, but in the long run it will mean bringing the members into partnership with the government and the party in parliament, rather than largely ignoring them. But that raises a whole new debate.

Notes

1 In addition to the 146 seats Labour gained in 1997, two seats were added to the list – Dorset South and Boston and Skegness. However, within this group of 148

'priority' seats there was a smaller group of 'battleground' seats, namely those which were regarded as the most electorally vulnerable. Labour's central headquarters' staff at Millbank operated with some degree of flexibility in choosing the 'battleground' seats. They included the 56 seats which Labour had not targeted in 1997 and had won unexpectedly plus some others believed to be particularly vulnerable. The number therefore varied between 60 and 70. These 'battleground' seats received more central help (for example, more access to the national telephone bank) than the 'priority' seats. In addition, a few other Labour-held seats (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, Cardiff Central and Chesterfield) were believed to be possible losses and were therefore accorded some central assistance.

2 Eighty full-timers were recruited on short-term contracts in 1999 and then intensively trained in election campaigning over the next 12 months before being sent in Autumn 2000 to particular regions to take responsibility for a group of priority seats.

3 'Blitzing' involved the MP and a group of members knocking on doors in a strong Labour neighbourhood and inviting people to meet and raise issues with the MP. The belief was that this more direct, face-to-face contact would reinforce people's likelihood of voting in such areas.

4 In addition to the national manifesto, the Labour Party also produced separate Scottish, Welsh, business, and small business manifestos.

5 The details of the election study, together with the data and questionnaires can be downloaded from (http://www.essex.ac.uk/bes/).

6 Face-to-face canvassing is of course less expensive than telephone canvassing, since it requires no special technology or professional employees to implement. So telephone canvassing may be growing, but it is doing so in a crowded space as the rise of telemarketing makes the task of keeping individuals on the phone increasingly more difficult.

7 Since there is a well-known tendency for individuals to exaggerate their participation in an election, respondents' self-reported turnouts were validated by checking the public records. Records of individual turnout are held in the Lord Chancellor's Office in London for England and Wales and at the local authority level in Scotland. The information is publicly available and is recorded to act as a check on electoral fraud.

8 The standardized effects are calculated using Gary King's CLARIFY programme, which can be downloaded from his website (http://gking.harvard.edu/).

9 The combined probability of voting for Labour as a result of face-to-face canvassing and reminding voters to turn out is 0.12, or roughly the same as the effect of a party political broadcast.

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